

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USSS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 EUR-25 DRC-01 NIC-01 /150 W

----- 064400

R 241240Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0260

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 8560

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS

SUBJECT: KNESSET DEBATE OVER GOI ACCEPTANCE OF CEASEFIRE

1. AFTER HEATED DEBATE INTO EARLY MORNING OCT 24 KNESSET
ADOPTED A RESOLUTION INTRODUCED BY GOVERNING COALITION IN
SUPPORT OF MRS MEIR'S SPEECH EXPLAINING POLITICAL AND MILITARY
REASONS FOR GOI ACCEPTANCE OF RES 338. HAND VOTE WAS
TAKEN WITH OVER 100 (OUT OF 120) MEMBERS PRESENT BUT NO COUNT WAS
ANNOUNCED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ONLY RIGHTWING BLOC LIKUD
OPPOSED THE RES AND THE PRO-MOSCOW RAKAH COMMUNISTS
ABSTAINED.

2. LIKUD LEADERS BEGIN AND RIMALT, UTILIZING SAME ARGUMENTS
CONTAINED IN LIKUD'S OCT 22 DECLARATION (TEL AVIV 8503),
SAID THAT GOI'S ACCEPTANCE OF CEASEFIRE WOULD INVITE RATHER
THAN PREVENT FURTHER AGGRESSION BY AWARDING SYRIA AND EGYPT
A PRIZE FOR HAVING ATTACKED ISRAEL. GOI'S HASTE HAD DEPRIVED
IDF OF A DECISIVE VICTORY: WAR HAD ENDED IN A STALEMATE GIVING
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ARABS OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD THEIR MILITARY STRENGTH. LIKUD

ALSO REITERATED ITS OPPOSITION TO IMPLEMENTATION OF RES
242, EMPHASIZING ARGUMENT THAT CURRENT WAR HAD DEMONSTRATED
HOW ESSENTIAL OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WERE TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

3. MRS MEIR IN REBUTTAL SAID SHE DISAGREED WITH 99 PERCENT
OF WHAT BEGIN HAD SAID, NOTING IN PARTICULAR THAT HE HAD NOT
EXPLAINED WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF ISRAEL HAD NOT ACCEPTED
US-USSR CEASEFIRE INITIATIVE AND THAT HE HAD NOT OFFERED ANY
ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM. QUESTIONING OPPOSITION'S MOTIVATION
IN LAUNCHING ITS POLITICAL ATTACK, SHE ASKED WITH SCATHING IRONY
WHETHER IT WAS APPROPRIATE FOR THESE FIRST CLARIFICATION TO TAKE
PLACE IN PRESENCE OF RADIO AND TV.

4. COMMENT: LAST NIGHT'S DEBATE WAS OPENING GUN OF POLITICAL
BATTLE WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO RESUME EARLY NEXT WEEK AND
CONTINUE UNTIL ELECTION DAY. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT AFTER
LAST NIGHT'S STEAM LETTING, PAUSE OF A FEW DAYS IS ASSURED.
ELECTION CAMPAIGN CLEARLY WILL FOCUS ON SECURITY AND FOREIGN
POLICY ISSUES ARISING FROM WAR INCLUDING QUESTIONS OF
PREPAREDNESS, ACCURACY OF INTELLIGENCE, AND POLITICAL DECISIONS
REGARDING GOI POSITION ON CEASEFIRE, AND NEGOTIATING
PROSPECTS. MAIN PLAYERS IN POLITICAL DEBATE WILL BE LABOR
ALIGNMENT AND LIKUD OPPOSITION, WITH OTHER PARTIES PLAYING
RELATIVELY MINOR ROLE.

5. SEASONED OBSERVERS OF DOMESTIC POLITICS HAVE TOLD US THAT
LIKUD MADE TWO MISTAKES IN LAST NIGHT'S DEBATE: IT INCORRECTLY
ASSESSED STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ACCEPTANCE OF CEASEFIRE,
AND IT OPENED ITS POLITICAL ATTACK PREMATURELY. WE AGREED THAT AT
THIS MOMENT ISRAELI PUBLIC GENERALLY SUPPORTS GOI ACCEPTANCE
OF CEASEFIRE. BUT GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE MANY DIFFICULT
QUESTIONS TO ANSWER IN MONTH AHEAD AND WE ANTICIPATE
SHARP POLITICAL CONTROVERSY PRECEDING ELECTIONS, WHICH
KNESSET REPORTEDLY WILL RESCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER 11.

KEATING

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